

NMPF urges USDA to return milk to school lunches

WASHINGTON, D.C. — It was during the Carter administration, when the "dietary guidelines" anti-fat bandwagon came into vogue, that the United States Department of Agriculture removed the requirement that whole milk be included in the nation's school lunch program.

Since then, only low-fat milk is required to be included in the selections offered in the federally-subsized school lunch program, which involves millions of children each school day.

Now, the National Milk Producers Federation would like dairy farmers to help change that.

NMPF is urging parents of school age children and dairy farmers to write to USDA, urging the agency to again make whole milk a required alternative for children participating in the lunch program.

"USDA has not opened the regulations specifically to gather opinions," explains NMPF's director of communications Doni Dondero. "But, as long as it has been opened to comments, we can't let this opportunity go by."

USDA has proposed a reorganization of existing regulations on child nutrition programs, and the milk producers federation sees it as a "window of opportunity."

"If a person is a parent of a school age child, that qualifies them as personally interested and affected. You can explain that the lunch program is an example of good eating habits, or a model for children, and that you don't like whole milk not being offered. Whole milk should be offered as an example of a valuable food that children should consider selecting," Dondero adds.

Comments must be received by USDA, postmarked no later than April 15, and should be addressed

to: Ms. Diane Berger, Section Head, Policy and Program Development Branch, Child Nutrition Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, Alexandria, Virginia 22303.

Writers are asked to cite in their letters the following regulation reference: "FNS proposed rule on the National School Lunch Program, CFR 7, Part 210.10 d 1 milk."

Milk consumption has dropped in schools for a number of possible reasons, according to NMPF. One reason has been the initiation a few years ago of "offer vs. serve," which allows children to select only three of five nutritional items offered daily on the school lunch program.

If children do not prefer the taste of lowfat milk, and if their school district is not one which has voluntarily continued to offer whole milk as an alternative choice, they may not select milk at all as one of their choices.

And many children, says NMPF, are doing just that.

Because of a recent court decision, soft drinks and other "junk" foods are now available at many schools, even competing with milk in the lunch lineup. That ruling came in a U.S. Court of Appeals case for the District of Columbia Circuit, in National Soft Drink Association vs. Block, et al., which altered the "competitive food service regulations," originally designed to restrict the sale in schools of foods of minimal nutritional value.

In its own study, "The National Evaluation of School Nutrition Programs," USDA found that "Milk is a good source of calcium since it is difficult to obtain sufficient calcium from other sources."

That study further recognized milk as "an important nutritional

component of all USDA school nutrition programs," and "its presence in the meal patterns probably accounts for some of the greater nutrient intakes associated with participation in the School Breakfast Program."

The study continues that "large proportions of the student population do not obtain their RDA (recommended daily allowance) for calcium." And, USDA's statistics state that over one-half of the student population consumes under 100 percent of their RDA for calcium, while over 30 percent of the student population consumed less than two-thirds the calcium RDA.

"So the provision of milk to students through the School Nutritional Programs is an important contribution to maintaining and improving the health of the nation's children, notes the USDA study.

Earlier studies by the Agriculture Department, done before the 1975 elimination of whole milk from the lunch program requirements, found that students consumed milk with school lunches consumed more milk both at school, and on a 24-hour basis, than did students eating any other type of lunch.

"The child should have the right to choose the type of milk he or she prefers," says NMPF, and not some misguided, self-proclaimed

'nutritionist,' who is willing to serve high fat foods like hot dogs and french fries, yet cut back on fats through serving skim milk, which reduces student milk consumption.

Dairy farmers are urged to write their comments to USDA—not later than April 15—to the above address, and to send copies, with any ad-

ditional comments, to their congressional representatives.

NMPF also encourages dairymen to contact their friends, neighbors, and farm, school and community organizations for further public support and letter-writing assistance in having whole milk requirements reinstated in the federal school lunch program.

NMPF guidelines

How to write to USDA

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In urging dairy farmers to write to USDA in support of returning whole milk to the school lunch program, the National Milk Producers Federation has issued a collection of suggestions on letter writing to USDA, Congress and the White House.

While these guidelines are suggested along with background information on the recommendations for the whole milk, letter-writing campaign, NMPF stresses their value for writing on to officials any issue.

—Determine who is your best audience. Who is the best person, agency, or official to write to? In many cases, it is more than one. In commenting on regulations, for instance, the first priority is writing to the administering agency publishing the regulations. Follow-up letters to your Senators and Congressmen and to the White House can have a big impact, too. Legislation issues are best addressed to a Member of Congress. When it's time for the final Executive signature, however, then is the time to let the White House know what's on your mind.

—Be sure your name, address and phone number is clearly on the letter. Your letter is important because you are important. But if the letter does not clearly identify you, then it loses its impact.

—The first sentence is the most important: Assume that it is possible that only your first sentence will be read. Boil down your comments to a clear, concise statement and put it in your first sentence.

—Describe who you are: Make sure the government employee or Congressional aide knows about you and why they should care about your comments. Tell them where you farm, what you produce, what your economic interests are in the program you are commenting on, and tell them your connections to groups and organizations you are a member or leader of.

—Discuss your issues clearly: The more substantive information you can use to explain your position on the issue you are commenting on, the more effective your letter will be. However, write even if your letter is very simple, because your letter will count. USDA, for instance, likes to say that letters regarding regulations are not "votes," but they are. Every letter from a citizen counts toward influencing decisions.

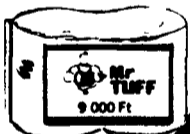
—Be neat: Your letter doesn't have to be typewritten, but it must be easy to read. The appearance of your letter carries the message of who you are, so make your letter look smart.

—Get you comments in on time.



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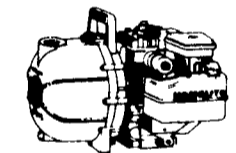
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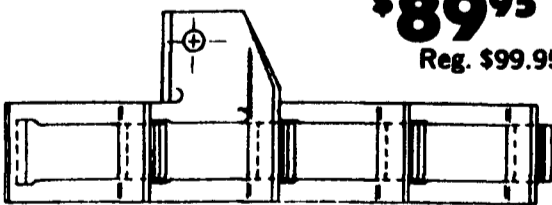
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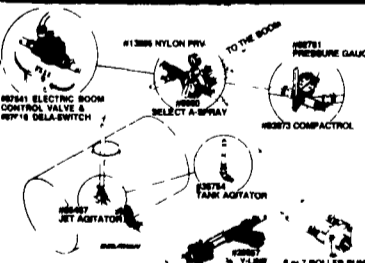
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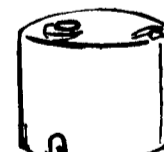
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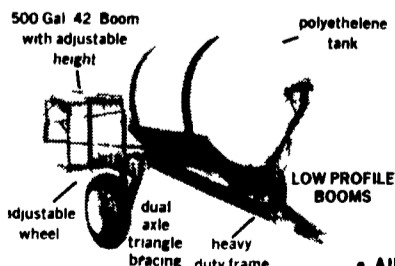


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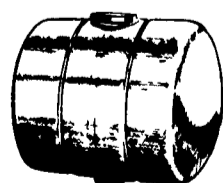
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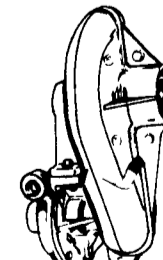


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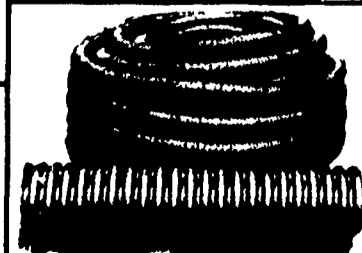


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